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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a summary of research on the professional induction needs of beginning school administrators and a report on a professional induction project conducted by Arkansas State University. The project initiation process: (1) identified and interviewed newly practicing school administrators in 25 Arkansas counties; (2) determined their inservice needs and interests; and (3) prepared a program plan to meet those needs. Interviews conducted with 59 beginning administrators at varying levels led to the development of the Association for the Enhancement of School Administration, a response vehicle designed to provide professional growth opportunities to all individuals interested in educational administration. The association's goals and activities are outlined. (LMI)

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PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL INDUCTION SERVICES FOR BEGINNING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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Based on a session presented at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Little Rock, Arkansas, April 18, 1991

With the implementation of the redesigned NCATE standards in 1985 schools, colleges, and departments of education became responsible for providing assistance to beginning educational professionals. Since then, a good deal of attention has been given to identifying and providing activities which facilitate the entrance of new teacher education graduates into the teaching profession. Less attention has been given to issues related to the professional induction of other beginning educational professionals. This paper attempts to summarize some of the most pertinent background regarding the professional induction needs of beginning school administrators and reports on a professional induction project conducted by Arkansas State University during the 1990 fall semester.

Although the term "professional induction" does not frequently appear in the educational administration literature prior to 1985, considerable attention has been given to induction-related concepts in that portion of the literature focusing on bureaucratic-role and professional socialization beginning in about the mid-twentieth century. Coincident with the initiation of consideration of these induction-related concepts is the development of the administrative science movement in educational administration which--among other important characteristics--relied much more heavily on social science research and which most seriously began to view the role of the school administrator in a specialized bureaucratic professional context. With the major consideration of bureaucratic-role and professional socialization issues which most significantly began in the 1950s, the nation's professors of educational administration recognized the need to

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ensure an orderly initiation into new roles and responsibilities which accompanied one's move from classroom teaching to school administration.

One may well assume that the professional induction needs of school administrators would differ significantly from those of beginning teachers. First, new school administrators have almost always established themselves as successful educational professionals prior to the beginning of their administrative careers. In addition, these same individuals usually begin their new bureaucratic roles at an older age than most new teachers--presumably with a generally more varied range of personal life experiences and broader perspective on the nature of professional work itself. Therefore, we can expect that some of the cognitive dissonance created among beginning teachers as a result of the disparity between expectation and reality (viz-a-vie the role/purpose of schools) to be less significant among beginning administrators (Bush & Kogan, 1982; Cuban 1976). However, in recognizing that new roles bring new responsibility and an accompanying new perspective, we might expect that beginning administrators sometimes find the "baggage" of their previous professional experience to be more problematic than facilitating.

In 1985, Alvy and Coladarci reported the results of a study in which they identified the performance problem areas of beginning elementary and secondary school principals in the State of Montana. Their findings affirmed the previous assumptions--all of the beginning administrators had previous teaching experience and all were significantly older than the beginning teachers in their schools. In addition, it was found that perceived performance in critical administrative task areas differed among beginning administrators based upon the variety of professional roles held previously--that is, beginning principals who had previously held quasi-administrative jobs such as department chair or director of guidance reported different performance concerns than those who had only classroom teaching experience.

Overall, the following items were reported by the beginning administrators as constituting those areas in which assistance was most needed: (1) Managing professional and personal time in an efficient manner; (2) Facilitating change and resolving conflict; (3) Establishing and

communicating an instructionally-focused vision for the school: (4) Carrying out the personnel function of the principal--including, but not limited to, supervising and evaluating staff, providing meaningful staff development opportunities, and recommending dismissal, and (5) Building and maintaining high school moral. In identifying the resources which these beginning principals had used during their crucial professional induction period, it is not surprising to find superintendents and other principals listed as the two primary sources. It is more than a little disturbing to find that college and university personnel were not listed among sources of professional initiation assistance. This is especially troubling in light of the fact that several other non-professional groups were identified as sources of assistance during the beginning professional period--secretaries, parents, etc.

During the 1990 fall semester, Arkansas State University initiated a project whereby the needs of new school administrators in the ASU service region would be identified and a subsequent plan developed for the continuing satisfaction of these beginning professionals.

In initiating the induction project, one professor from the Department of Educational Administration at Arkansas State University was allowed one-quarter load release time to complete a three-part charge:

1. To identify and interview all newly practicing school administrators in twenty-five Arkansas counties constituting the ASU service area. (Because of time constraints, Missouri constituents were not contacted in this initial phase.) "Newly practicing administrators" were practitioners new to school administration or new to the administrative roles in which they were serving at the time of the interview.
2. To consult with these newly practicing school administrators to determine their inservice needs and interests.
3. To prepare a plan as to how ASU's Department of Educational Administration could establish and operate a program to assist beginning administrators which

is feasible given current departmental resources.

Direct contact was made with fifty-nine beginning public school administrators in the following manner: 50 face-to-face interviews, eight telephone interviews, one interview via letter. Characteristically, the beginning administrator group was consittuted as follows: one K-12 administrator, 21 central office administrators, 14 elementary administrators, 23 secondary administrators. These administrators were employed in 31 different school districts at 52 different school or central office sites.

Following the data collection, the planning of a response vehicle was undertaken. During this phase of the project, a decision was made that the vehicle should serve all administrators rather than just beginning administrators; however, the new practitioners would be given special attention in whatever response system that would evolve. It was determined that the delivery vehicle would consist of three primary components: the development of an association to help serve the professional growth of newly practicing as well as those of all area administrators, identification of newly practicing administrators, and initial contact and survey of these new administrators.

University-Based Professional Association: A Response Vehicle

The Department of Educational Administration and Secondary Education at Arkansas State will develop the Association for the Enhancement of School Administration. Its purpose will be to provide opportunities designed to enhance professional growth for the following groups from both public and private education:

1. Practitioners new to school administration
2. Experienced school administrators
3. Prospective and retired administrators
4. Supervisory personnel
5. College/university professors
6. Personnel from local and regional education cooperatives

Membership will, however, not be limited to these groups but will consist of individuals interested in educational administration. Thus, college students, local and state politicians, etc. may

participate. The annual dues of $5.00 per member should sustain the organization, thereby making it unnecessary for the university and the department to subsidize the service continually.

The association will be governed by a board of directors and an executive director. The board will consist of practicing school administrators and a representative(s) from area educational cooperatives while the executive director will be a staff member from the Department of Educational Administration and Secondary Education at Arkansas State University.

The association's activities will be multifaceted:

1. One fall and one spring meeting will focus on some of the topics identified in an annual needs-assessment survey, provide socialization opportunities, and announce upcoming professional growth opportunities to be held in the state, and discuss legislation pertinent to schooling. The meetings will be held on the ASU campus where a meal will be provided at the expense of participants.
2. The association will, on a per-semester basis, publish for all members a newsletter entitled Findings in order to report
   a. selected research and/or practices valuable to school administrators
   b. a calendar of events in Arkansas pertinent to the professional growth of administrators
   c. association news.
3. The association will sponsor a mentoring program for all beginning school administrators. ASU's Department of Educational Administration and Secondary Education will purchase from NASSP a site license for mentoring. All department faculty will be trained and will in turn train recruited association members. For a period of two years, these mentors will then be matched with proteges who are newly practicing administrators. This monetary investment should be the primary departmental outlay.
4. In addition to serving administrator's professional growth needs, the association

will sponsor monthly public service announcements:

a. Thirty-second public service radio spots suitable for all patrons of public and private schools in Eastern Arkansas and Southern Missouri will be produced at the College of Communication on the ASU campus and offered to all radio stations in the ASU service area.

b. A column focusing on educational concerns will be offered to all newspapers in the university's service area.

5. The College of Education at Arkansas State University will provide association members as well as each school in the university's service area with the college's staff directory noting areas of expertise of each professor.

Identification of Newly Practicing Administrators

Annually, the executive director of the association will identify all newly practicing administrators primarily by comparing the newly published Arkansas Education Directory and the Missouri School Directory with those published the previous year. In addition, information will be obtained via the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, the Arkansas State Department of Education, and "the grapevine."

Initial Contact of Newly Practicing Administrators

Each year the association's executive director will direct the initial contact and survey of the beginning administrators via representatives of the Department of Educational Administration and Secondary Education. Professors assigned to teach undergraduate courses in secondary teacher education--courses that involve placement of students at school sites--will conduct the majority of these interviews since these professors visit several schools in order to fulfill course supervision requirements. Other professors in the department will visit administrators not in schools hosting students from these courses. The purpose of the interviews will be as follows:

1. To glean input concerning professional growth needs and interests of beginning administrators
2. To make a courtesy call on behalf of the Department of Educational Administration and the College of Education
3. To acquaint new administrators with sources of information and support, such as The Arkansas Association of Educational Administration.

Summary

As the review of literature indicates, beginning school administrators have professional induction needs to which considerable attention has been given since the mid-twentieth century. However, these new practitioners historically tend no to seek initiation assistance from the college and university personnel generally instrumental in their academic preparation. Arkansas State University has formed the Association for the Enhancement of School Administration to function as a response vehicle through which the university can significantly influence the induction needs to newly practicing school administrators. An additional purpose of this vehicle is to serve the professional-growth needs of all school administrators in the university's service area. Hopefully, Arkansas State University will, via this association, become an important player in enhancing the professional skills of area administrators.

Appendix

Identified Inservice Needs and Interests Of Newly Practicing School Administrators

Numerous and widely varying inservice needs and interests of newly practicing administrators were identified. Following is a list in descending order of those mentioned most often:

1. School finance
   a. Budget construction and management
   b. Refinancing bonds
   c. Insurance
   d. Annual reports and coding system
   e. Grantsmanship
2. School law, particularly due process for students and staff
3. Staff relations
   a. Promoting cooperation among teachers with one another and with administration
   b. Developing and implementing staff development and professional growth programs
4. Student discipline and motivational techniques
   a. Techniques for dealing with students who display repetitive behavioral problems
   b. Techniques for dealing with students exhibiting bizarre behavior
   c. Techniques for dealing with students who are the offspring of drug users and who suffer mentally and/or physically from such abuse
   d. Techniques for enhancing student motivation
   e. Classroom management skills
5. Scheduling techniques
6. Information concerning special education problems
   a. PL 94-142 rules and procedures
   b. PL 89-313 rules and procedures
   c. Laws concerning transportation of the handicapped
   d. Alternatives to the pull-out programs
7. Time management
8. Comprehensive Outcomes Evaluation program development and implementation
9. Effective schools research/criteria
10. School-community relations
    a. Public relations
    b. School-business partnerships
    c. Parent-Teacher conferencing skills
11. Distance-learning technology and its utilization
12. Identifying and implementing school consolidation procedures
13. Adult learning styles

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